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Press Release

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Bikers share street smarts

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CHIÈVRES, Belgium - Some Soldiers attend the school of hard knocks. Others prefer their street smarts to text books. Still others take the “lessons-learn” approach to increasing their operational knowledge.

But when comes to motorcycle safety, it’s a blend of text books and street smarts that means the most on the road.

According to Rudy Magain, safety officer for U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, the number of Soldiers killed on motorcycles has doubled within the past five years.

“In 2001, 15 Soldiers were killed Army-wide riding motorcycles,” he said. “That number continues to grow every year. In 2005, motorcycle fatalities surpassed private-owned vehicle fatalities with 40 riders dying in crashes that year.”

Accordingly, the Army has armed its communities with motorcycle safety campaigns to help save Soldiers lives.

For example, bikers across the three Chièvres Garrison communities joined the SHAPE Harley-Davidson Club on May 20 for a Motorcycle Safety Sunday at Caserne Daumerie as part of a toy ride, road out and safety day.

Many of the members kicked off the motorcycle fellowship by attending a chapel service and barbecue. Hondas, Kawasakis, BMWs, Harley Fatboys and Indian motorcycles – a total of 32 bikes lined the streets as their owners went through a safety office sponsored checklist.

Representatives from the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, an international organization involved in government relations, safety research and public awareness campaigns,

shared a few quick tips with the bikers before they hit the Belgian streets. Suggestions included:

- Arrive on time with a full tank of gas
- Hold a riders' meeting to discuss the route, rest and fuel stops, hand signals, etc.
- Keep the group size manageable
- Ride in a staggered formation that allows a cushion of safety so motorcyclists have time and space to react to dangers
- Avoid side-by-side formations

Overall, there are five critical messages that MSF emphasizes to anyone wanting to ride motorcycles in Europe: get trained and licensed; wear protective gear; ride unimpaired; ride within your limits; and be a lifelong learner.

Magain said: "Motorcycle riders need to keep following the basic riding rules."

As part of the day, director of emergency services and a member of the SHAPE Harley-Davidson Club, Lt. Col. Dennis Zink organized a group ride with a charity toy run to Orphanages La Maison at Ostiches and Le Clos at Arbre during the group's trek from Chièvres to Tournai, Belgium.

"It is a nice thing to do," said Anthony Greco "and we're bringing them some joy. That's why it is important for us to stop by these two orphanages."

For more on Installation Management Command-Europe motorcycle safety programs, visit http://www.imcom-europe.army.mil/sites/management/so_atstp.asp

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Photo Motorcycle 1:

Director of emergency services and SHAPE Harley-Davidson Club member Lt. Col. Dennis Zink leads 31 fellow bikers from across the Chièvres garrison community on a Motorcycle Safety Sunday road out and "toy ride. (Photo by J.D. Hardesty, U.S. Army Garrison Benelux)

Photo Motorcycle 2:

One of the Harley-Davidson's carried its own safety message on the gear box. (Photo by J.D. Hardesty)

Photo Bikers 3:

Gary Wilson, a member of the SHAPE Harley Davidson Club, shows Jordan from the Orphanage La Maison at Ostiches how to play with the toy he just received. (Photo by Cis Spook)

The U.S. Army Installation Management Command, Europe Region (IMCOM-Europe) is one of six regional offices created Oct. 24, 2006, (formerly known as Installation Management Agency) as part of an Army-wide initiative to focus management of Army installations around the world under one organization. IMCOM-Europe is responsible for all facets of support for U.S. Army Soldiers and families in Europe from drivers' licenses to child care to force protection. As the landlord for all U.S. Army facilities in Europe, IMCOM-Europe is responsible for infrastructure and continuing the Army's strong commitment to environmental protection. Its higher headquarters is located in Arlington, Va.